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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE Newport, R.I.

<u>Special Operations Forces and Foreign Internal Defense:</u> <u>an Effective Counterterrorism Method</u>

Otto K. Liller

MAJ, USA

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College of the Department of the Navy.

Signature:	
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Professor Paul Romanski	
JMO Professor	

ABSTRACT

Special Operations Forces (SOF) can be expected to maintain the current commitment levels in both Iraq and Afghanistan; however, Senior US military and SOF leadership must recognize the difficulty of balancing short-term goals and long-term solutions in the War on Terrorism. In a war of such long duration, SOF can provide the nation with many more strategic and operational options than just special reconnaissance and direct action missions in support of the JTF commander during combat operations. This paper argues that uniformly coordinated Foreign Internal Defense (FID) activities, undertaken by United States SOF, is the appropriate method for achieving long-term results in the War on Terrorism. The utility of persistent SOF activities with allies is described using recent case study examples, strategic level CT capstone documents, and current FID doctrine.

Senior United States military leadership retain considerable influence over the direction and magnitude of the US's military FID participation, although the primary agency for planning and supervising US sponsored FID programs lies with the Department of State. Operationally, Combatant Commanders translate strategic FID guidance into actionable plans as part of their Theater Security Cooperation Programs, with pervasive input by the combatant commander's POLAD and theater SOC commander. SOF represent all elements of our national power during FID activities. Militarily, SOF are recognized internationally as elite warriors. Economically, SOF provide the US and host nation governments significant cost-benefit savings. SOF also communicate positive human rights and self-determination messages while all the while fostering strong diplomatic relationships that are exceptionally durable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction		1
II. Analysis		
Current Doctrine	3	
Strategic Guidance		5
Global Commitment		6
Measures of Effectiveness		7
III. FID as a Long-Term Counterterrorism Method		
Recent Case-Study Examples		8
Future SOF FID Contributions		9
Who's in Charge?		11
IV. Conclusion		13
V. Notes		15
VI. Bibliography		17
VII. Appendices		
FID Coordination		A1
FID: An Integrated Program		A2

One report from a Special Forces soldier in Afghanistan reads, quote, "I'm advising a man on how to best employ light infantry and horse cavalry in the attack against Taliban T-55 mortars, artillery, personnel carriers, machine guns, a tactic I think became outdated with the invention of the Gatling gun."

I. Introduction

United States Special Operations Forces (SOF) have made immeasurable contributions to the current War on Terrorism since its start in October 2001. There is also no doubt that these highly-trained professional soldiers have achieved significant results principally in support of operational and strategic level objectives: effectively facilitating the elimination of two opposition regimes and destroying Al Qaeda's stronghold in Afghanistan. Yet, Lieutenant General Kensinger, Commander of the United States Army Special Operations Command, admits that the War on Terrorism has required a 'near total commitment' of U.S. Army SOF working in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, as well as other troubled areas around the world. This admission is telling for two reasons. First, one may wonder whether the current level of commitment in Iraq and Afghanistan has left the remaining Combatant Commanders too few of their most critical resource, SOF, to help shape the security environment in their areas of responsibility. Second, what remaining courses of action besides combat operations are available to SOF that may yield long-term dividends in the War on Terrorism?

Senior United States military and SOF leadership understand the difficulty of balancing short-term commitments and long-term solutions. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz noted in September 2004 that: "[the War on Terrorism] will be a long struggle...but we need to sequence out efforts so that we focus our energies in the right places at the right times." Likewise, Jeffrey Nadaner, the Deputy to the Assistant

Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict stated; "we're trying to place stabilization operations on comparable footing with combat operations." For the purpose of this paper, it is assumed that current SOF commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan are 'right-sized', and will remain that way indefinitely in order to help fulfill our nation's responsibilities there.

This paper argues that uniformly coordinated Foreign Internal Defense (FID) activities, undertaken by United States SOF, is the appropriate method for achieving long-term results in the War on Terrorism. The utility of persistent SOF activities with allies and cooperative international partners is described using recent case study examples, strategic level counterterrorism capstone documents, and current FID doctrine. Additional analysis of competing counterterrorism organizations and responsibilities is included only as a familiarization into the complex nature of the War on Terrorism.

SOF can provide the nation with many more strategic and operational options than just special reconnaissance and direct action missions in support of the joint task force commander. During fiscal year 2002, SOF deployed to nearly 150 countries worldwide. Moreover, it is appropriate to assume that SOF activities within those 150 countries, more often than not, were not small-scale raids against high-value targets or airfield seizures to introduce follow-on conventional combat forces. In reality, SOF units were participating in a series of Military Operations Other than War, specifically Foreign Internal Defense, directly in support of Geographic Combatant Commanders and American ambassadors. They were fulfilling, in a fundamental sense, the mission statement of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) on a daily basis.

II. Analysis

Current FID Doctrine.

Joint Publication 3-07.1 defines Foreign Internal Defense as "the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency". Furthermore, the doctrine identifies three essential objectives that are critical to success: "building viable institutions; promoting the growth of freedom, democratic institutions, and fair and international trade; and supporting the security, stability, and well-being of our allies and other nations friendly to our interests". In effect, United States sponsored FID activities are planned, resourced, and implemented to increase a nation's own ability to defend itself from internal and external debilitating factors by strengthening all aspects of its national power.

The United States Department of State, through subordinate agencies, has the primary responsibility for the planning and execution of United States sponsored FID programs.

More specifically, the Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implement national FID policies and ensure national-level collaboration with Department of Defense FID efforts.

Additionally, the Central Intelligence Agency facilitates United States FID programs by providing national and regional level needs assessments and helping to measure the ongoing effectiveness of established programs.

The United States Department of Defense also dedicates significant resources and planning efforts to United States FID programs. Both the Assistant Secretary of Defense

for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff retain considerable influence over the direction and magnitude of the United States' military FID participation. They communicate their FID guidance to the Geographic Combatant Commanders and the functional Unified Commands, specifically the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), via the National Military Strategy and the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan. Operationally, the Geographic Combatant Commanders translate strategic FID guidance into actionable plans as part of their Theater Security Cooperation Programs; with pervasive input by the combatant commander's political advisor and theater special operations command commander. In this context, FID programs remain an interagency process from policy development through execution involving ambassadors, their country teams, and the civilian and military units responsible for carrying out FID missions. The Strategic to Operational, and Department of State to Department of Defense, lines of coordination for FID programs are graphically depicted in Appendix A1.

United States military involvement in FID programs is directly linked to supporting a host nation's specific internal defense and development (IDAD) program, and are historically categorized onto three degrees of support: indirect support, direct support (not involving combat operations), and combat operations (See Appendix A2). Special Operations Forces (SOF), although not the only military contributor to FID programs, are uniquely organized, trained, and equipped to assist host nation IDAD efforts.

USSOCOM, under MPF-11, is the only unified command in with its own budget, and is also the only unified command mandated by congressional legislation to maintain FID as a core task. Key SOF contributions to FID traditionally include support to

counterinsurgency, counterdrug operations, and unconventional warfare; however, SOF elements such as Civil Affairs can specifically address non-military related internal development problems as well.¹⁷ SOF actively contribute to the War on Terrorism, as part of FID, by strengthening a host nation's military and paramilitary forces' overall proficiency; including specific anti-terrorism and Counterterrorism capabilities.¹⁸

Strategic Guidance.

On September 28th, 2001, The United Nations published Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1373 "reaffirming the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorists." This passage reemphasized to every nation their inherent responsibility to confront terrorists at home and cooperate internationally to defeat this long-standing threat. UNSCR 1373 further directs that individual states deny safe haven to terrorists or terrorist supporters, prevent trans-national movement of terrorists across their borders, and to take active measures to stop any future terrorist acts. ²⁰ In effect, the War on Terrorism must be of international scope, waged collectively by the forceful determination of individual nations.

"America will help nations that need our assistance in combating terror". The National Security Strategy of the United States clearly states that in the current international security environment weak states are as great a danger to the national security of the United States as strong states were in the 20th Century. It highlights the importance of eliminating the root causes of terrorism in addition to the elimination of the terrorists themselves. In order to attain these tough goals, the National Security Strategy recognizes the necessity to strengthen alliances, prevent the enemy from threatening our

friends, expand development in countries via democratic methods, and pursue cooperative agendas.²³ The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism identifies specifically a 4D strategy to be successful: defeat terrorist organizations, deny further sponsorship, diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit, and defend the United States, its citizens, and our interests at home and overseas.²⁴ Notwithstanding the United States' unique position and determination, this strategy fully understands that ultimate success depends on evolving the capabilities of the willing and able states, while enabling the nations that are incapable of confronting terrorism alone.²⁵

The United States military, as outlined in the current National Military Strategy, will seek the necessary security conditions in willing nations by conducting security cooperation activities and fostering new military relationships. These conditions of increased stability and development will result in a stronger anti-terrorism environment by strengthening the capabilities of partner nations. ²⁶ Operational level priorities for SOF also reiterate the cooperative international aspect of the War on Terrorism. USSOCOM's 2003/2004 Posture Statement maintains that two of the five most critical priorities for SOF are: preemptive actions against global terrorist threats abroad, and continued stability operations to assist friendly governments to defeat internal threats. ²⁷ These priorities, combined with homeland security missions and small-scale contingency operations, are demanding requirements for an active duty force just over 30,000 personnel, with another 15,000 in the United States Reserves and National Guard²⁸

In 2003, the Unites States Army Special Operations Command, the largest contributor of the nation's SOF, deployed its forces at a record level. More than 100 Special Forces

Global Commitment.

Operational Detachment-Alphas (SFODAs) and two civil affairs brigades were deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Two additional Special Forces battalions, approximately 32 SFODAs, and one civil affairs brigade were deployed to Afghanistan spearheading the reconstruction efforts and pursuing the remnants of Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters. Moreover, United States Navy Special Operations Forces' participation in Iraq included "the largest Navy SEAL operation in history" to protect critical oil facilities in Southern Iraq. This level of commitment constituted nearly one-half of all active duty SOF. Outside of the Central Command's area of responsibility, SOF deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines to train, advise, and assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Counterterrorism measures to defeat the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf. These SOF warriors mentioned above; Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and SEALs, constitute the primary SOF resource for the conduct of FID missions. USSOCOM must not overemphasize near-term combat requirements against terrorists in lieu of long-term strategic priorities against terrorism.

Measures of Effectiveness.

The War on Terrorism has been underway for over three years and there has not been another terrorist attack within the United States. Worldwide efforts have resulted in the death or incarceration of approximately three-quarters of Al-Qaeda's senior leadership and associates. Thousands of Al Qaeda and other terrorist fighters have been killed on battlefields around the world as well. SOF combat actions have directly contributed to these figures, yet foreign governments, not the United States, have captured all of the notable terrorist figures during host nation military operations and law enforcement actions. Specifically, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani were both

captured in Pakistan; Hambali, a top operational planner for Jemaah Islamiah in Southeast Asia, was captured in Thailand; and Abu Issa al–Hindi, a financial intelligence specialist, was captured in Great Britain.³³ These international accomplishments prove that the Defeat and Defend components of the United States' 4D strategy have been successful.

Measuring the effectiveness of Denying sanctuary and Diminishing underlying conditions of terrorism is more difficult. Certainly Iraq and Afghanistan are positive examples, but potential terrorist sanctuaries remain problematic due to the numerous areas around the world that remain ungoverned and underdeveloped. Current FID programs are working to extend governance into these access-challenged locations.

III. Foreign Internal Defense as a Long-Term Counterterrorism Method Recent Case-Study Examples.

Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines, also referred to as Joint Exercise Balikatan 02-1, illustrates many positive benefits of SOF participation in FID activities. JTF-510, lead by the theater Special Operations Command-Pacific, consisted primarily of Army Special Forces and Civil Affairs personnel. They were responsible for the advanced training of over ten Filipino infantry battalions, specifically addressing the ability to conduct detailed mission planning, command and control, and intelligence fusion in support of combat operations.³⁴ Special Forces teams focused on developing small unit leadership skills and light infantry tactics, techniques, and procedures. Results were achieved quickly. The combination of security assistance, in the form of training and equipment, and humanitarian and civic assistance to the population on Basilan Island, proved difficult for the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf to overcome. The presence of United

States SOF caused an area denial effect on the terrorist group while the humanitarian and civic action activities bolstered the image of the local Filipino governance on the island.³⁵ Furthermore, the training provided to the Filipino forces greatly strengthened their confidence levels and enhanced their operational Counterterrorism capabilities. This heightened capability directly resulted in the rescue of an American missionary who had been held by the Abu Sayyaf Group for over one year.³⁶ Ironically, one of the Special Forces-trained Filipino infantry battalions later participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom.³⁷

Present counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan also can be regarded as a FID mission for SOF considering the removal of the Taliban government from power in 2001 and the democratic election of Hamid Karzai as president. SOF continue to operate offensively against remnants of Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces, leading the multi-national counterinsurgency effort. Special Forces teams also worked in the initial phases to organize, train and equip Afghan National Army members, which is more significant in this context. Similarly, Civil Affairs personnel, as part of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, are catalyzing Afghani improvement to critical infrastructure and helping to spread local government control in all parts of the country. SOF also continue to actively participate in the key stabilization operations in the Republic of Georgia, Kosovo, and Columbia.

Future SOF FID Contributions.

SOF participation in future combat operations will not change drastically from the present. Small SOF units will leverage advanced technology with innovative methods to provide the joint force commander unique courses of action against the most challenging enemies. SOF participation in future FID activities; however, must become more

persistent, relevant and integrated to the War on Terrorism. Historical measures of effectiveness in FID such as military-to-military engagement statistics should no longer apply. Regionally oriented SOF units must become the subject matter experts on regional and trans-national terrorist threats by consistently interacting with counterterrorism experts from partner nations within their areas of responsibility. Given the number of terrorists captured by foreign governments, it is clear that SOF have as much to learn about Counterterrorism as we preach to know about it. Major General Lambert, Commander of the JFK Special Warfare Center, believes SOF officers should be assigned to extended tours of duty with foreign armies and Special Forces; ⁴²I concur.

Some may argue that conventional forces should also conduct FID operations routinely. Current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are pertinent examples of this, yet SOF characteristics provide the combatant commander superior options. Because of the inherently small force structure, SOF can more easily sustain themselves over extended periods of time. Additionally, in many instances, host nations are politically sensitive to the number of U.S. military forces operating in their country. Furthermore, SOF are regionally focused, culturally attuned professionals that often return to the same country numerous times over their careers. This results in reduced interoperability challenges, concrete working relationships, and a robust information-sharing environment.

Conventional forces cannot guarantee this level of commitment over an extended period of time.

Individual SOF soldiers, airmen, and sailors can also have an empowering effect on their host nation counterparts. As persistent representatives of the United States, SOF professionals must continue to promote individual human rights and self-determination.

SOF mobile training teams, as co-equal partners with the Unites States Drug Enforcement Agency, should continue to train foreign militaries and paramilitary forces on counter drug operations and small-unit border patrolling techniques. Rigorous multinational and joint training exercises can provide an excellent venue for evaluating the counterterrorism and counterinsurgency proficiency of both the host nation and SOF soldiers. Through focused security assistance and foreign military sales, SOF can strengthen a host nation's ability to secure its borders and marginalize illicit drug trafficking, striking at one of the most prominent enabling factors of trans-national terrorism. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell simply describes this approach as: "we have to do more with our allies and partners around the world."⁴³ To direct that positive energy and action, USSOCOM, as the lead United States military command for the War on Terrorism, created the Center for Special Operations to serve as a standing joint task force headquarters for all counterterrorism efforts. As a hub for interagency and other Department of Defense counterterrorism coordination, the Center for Special Operations will monitor the employment of SOF throughout varying degrees of conflict, including FID.44

Who's in Charge? Complementary or Competing Efforts.

The Counterterrorism policies of the United States and the international community, through the United Nations, are clear and mutually supportive. Defeat the immediate terrorist threat and work collaboratively to deny sanctuary and diminish the root causes of terrorism. Diplomatic efforts by the United Nations and the United States Department of State empower other nations to collectively sustain and enhance the political will to continue the War on Terrorism.⁴⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 1373 specifically

addresses: "the need to enhance coordination of efforts on national, sub national, regional and the international level in order to strengthen a global response to this serious challenge and threat to international security," and also established a Security Council Counterterrorism Committee to monitor forward progress. 46 Other international organizations have fashioned similar working groups to coordinate functional and regional terrorism issues; such as the G-8 Counterterrorism Action Group, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation CT Task Force, and the Organization of American States' Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism. 47 Precise cooperation will be necessary to ensure unity of effort with coordination groups from the United States including USSOCOM's Center for Special Operations, Joint Interagency Coordination Groups for Counterterrorism at each combatant command, and the Joint Interagency Task Forces for Counterdrug operations. United States Pacific Command's Counterterrorism Campaign Plan, first produced in 2003, is an example of a determined effort to collate the operational goals of Department of State and Department of Defense long-term counterrorism operations.⁴⁸

As described previously, the major SOF contributors to FID operations are the U.S. Army's Special Forces and Civil Affairs teams, U.S. Navy's SEALS, and the U.S. Air Force's 6th Special Operations Squadron. Likewise, the Department of State, specifically the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, also actively trains their foreign counterparts by providing anti-terrorism and Counterterrorism symposiums and training courses.

Although the Diplomatic Security and Drug Enforcement Agency officers focus specifically on law enforcement and border police, there are potential overlap issues with SOF activities. SOF participation in FID offers unique advantages to national policy

makers that the other agencies cannot. SOF personnel are combat forces first; therefore, they can integrate with their host nation partners regardless of the security situation or threat environment. Secondly, as part of the Department of Defense, USSOCOM is allocated a significant budget to train, equip, and man their ranks. USSOCOM's fiscal year 2004 budget of approximately \$6.7 Billion is nearly twice of what it was in 2001.

IV. Conclusion.

Former Director of Central Intelligence James Woolsey has labeled the current War on Terrorism as 'The Long War of the 21st Century', 50. The United States and the international community cannot afford to wan in their efforts to eliminate the terrorist threat from our society. Ultimate success will on relentless actions that are focused on both the terrorists and the fundamental conditions that enable them. This requires appropriate short-term and long-range strategies. The capstone national security and counterterrorism documents of the United States expertly communicate this approach: "The war against terrorists of global reach is a global enterprise of uncertain duration." It is clear that the United States cannot meet this challenge alone. Our ability to enhance the counterterrorism proficiency of systematically targeted countries will be essential. Future attacks against the United States and its allies are likely, yet preemptive combat and stability operations will marginalize the scope and magnitude of the threat.

SOF units are only one contributor to United States sponsored FID programs, yet they represent effectively all elements of our national power. Militarily, SOF are recognized internationally as elite warriors and trainers. Economically, SOF provide the Geographic Combatant Commanders and host nation governments significant cost-benefit savings.

Informationally, SOF communicate positive human rights and self-determination messages, while returning to the United States with the ground truth regarding foreign attitudes and concerns. Finally, consistent SOF interaction with foreign military and civilian leadership fosters strong diplomatic relationships that are exceptionally durable.

There is no doubt that SOF can be expected to maintain their current commitment levels in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Likewise, current FID doctrine is sound; however, minor amplifications need to specifically address that aggressive and focused SOF participation in FID programs is the right course of action for the War on Terrorism. USSOCOM, in close coordination with other interagency counterterrorism policy makers, must ensure that maximum attention and financial resources are dedicated to this long-term approach. The resulting strategic FID program, when combined with each host nation's internal defense and development plan, will finally represent a workable solution to defeating terrorists and the eliminate the underlying conditions they seek to exploit.

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